

eight floor, in the corner used by the cutters. They worked at a long wooden table, and under it was a mass of clippings from very light and inflammable material. These men were inveterate cigarette smokers, and the fire probably started either from a lighted cigarette or a match dropped by one of them.

"I am convinced of this by my examination and by the testimony of several witnesses I have examined. Besides this, I have been through the three floors below the ones burned, and which were occupied by a firm in the same business. I found on those floors any quantity of cigarette stumps and matches and many empty cigarette boxes.

Delay in Sending Alarm.

"Highly inflammable material was piled all over the room, and when once the fire started it gained headway so rapidly that it could not be checked. But in spite of the great danger that any one could recognize, the alarm was not turned in at once. There have been a dozen small blazes in the factory within the last few months, and they tried to put out the fire themselves before they turned in the alarm.

"There is no law to prevent smoking in such places, but the proprietors generally make their own rules. I understand that there were rules against smoking, but they were probably about as well enforced as such rules generally are. And when it came to those fellows trying to put out the fire themselves they had the same success that generally follows such an attempt. It was impossible for them to control a fire in such material as filled the place. It got away from them in five minutes, and the terrible loss of life followed."

The fire chief was greatly agitated by the long fight and the experiences of Saturday night, and he continued with a bitter arraignment of the fire and building laws of the city.

"I have predicted just such an occurrence," he said, "and the only wonder is that it did not take place before. I want to predict right now that unless radical measures are taken to install fire escapes in buildings, rated as fireproof, where large numbers of employees are at work, New York will witness a much more serious disaster than that at Washington Place and Greene street on Saturday afternoon.

Too Many Have Jurisdiction.

"Six departments of the city government have jurisdiction as to the ordering of fire escapes in buildings. They are the Buildings Department, the Tenement House Commission, State Department of Labor, Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity, the Police Department and the Department of Health.

"The department that is vitally interested in this question, the Fire Department, can make recommendations, but they are generally disregarded. It should be given to the Fire Department to order fire escapes on all such buildings where large numbers of men and women are employed. The only fire escape in this building was eighteen inches wide, and it buckled and was worthless after the heat touched it.

"I have always contended and recommended that all buildings, whether rated as fireproof or not, be equipped with a large balcony, extending across the outside of the building, with two commodious stairways leading from the balcony to the street. The stairways should be of sufficient breadth to accommodate at least two persons walking side by side, and should be provided with handrails.

Workers Should Be Safe.

"It seems to me that the poor man or woman who goes into a loft building to earn his or her bread and butter is entitled to protection from being roasted alive. Their bread and butter depends upon their labor. On the other hand, you may go to a theatre for amusement and find every reasonable safeguard thrown about you against fire. Exits are provided and sprinklers put out the fire as soon as it is discovered, almost."

"Another thing—our large office buildings should have fire escapes. Some day we will have a reputation of this latest experience, and I am afraid the death list will be larger.

When Borough President McAneny had an office in the Park Row Building I was called into two conferences in his office to discuss the building laws of the city. They said they wanted me to give them some practical suggestions for changes in the laws. Once I was invited to dinner at Mr. McAneny's house, but a big fire came along and I couldn't go.

"When I went down to his office I found a lot of architects there, and Rudolph Miller or somebody in the Bureau of Buildings was there. I found that everybody opposed my recommendations. I stood all alone in my recommendations for safeguards. They all talked about the city beautiful and how the beauties of the architecture would be spoiled."

"City Beautiful," All He Heard.

"I wanted outside fire escapes and one for every six windows. But all I heard was the city beautiful. I objected, also, to skyscrapers. It is impossible to fight fire in buildings twenty and thirty stories high, and there is no chance at all to save people who get caught in them and have no hope but in jumping.

"The life nets will not hold at such a height. The bodies go through them. It is impossible to hold the net or for the net to hold the body when the body shoots down 125 feet. Four or five stories, yes, but when the fall is from an

WRECK STREWN TENTH FLOOR OF THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST PLANT

IN THIS ROOM MANY BODIES WERE FOUND AND A SCORE OR MORE GIRLS JUMPED FROM THE WINDOWS



The latticed iron gate to the stairway leading from the ninth to the tenth floor. Many bodies were found in front of this gate. (Copyright, 1911, by American Press Association.)

extreme height, as it would be in the case of one of the downtown office buildings, the net is worthless. When I saw those women go through the iron dead lights in the sidewalk Saturday I was convinced of the uselessness of life nets for a fire in a skyscraper.

"The Fire Department should have control over everything pertaining to fire prevention. It should not only have control, but the power to enforce the law. At the present time it is not necessary under any law I know of governing office or loft or manufacturing buildings that are classed as fireproof to have fire escapes. Think of the appalling loss of life this would mean in one of the great downtown office buildings that often employ as many as 5,000 persons, most of them girls, if a fire started in one of them."

Borough President at Scene.

Borough President McAneny, who made a personal inspection of the building, pointed out that the Building Code, in Section 105, provided that all buildings of certain specified types, including factories, shall be equipped with "such good and sufficient fire escapes, stairways or other means of egress" as the Superintendent of Buildings may require.

"The question of the adequacy of fire escapes," he said, "has been determined, however, when the plans were presented for approval. Once accepted as adequate they have been permitted to remain."

According to the records of the Buildings Department the plans for the building were passed in 1900 by Superintendent Brady. The original plans were filed on April 15, 1900, but they were disapproved and amended plans were filed by Julius Frank, an architect.

The Buildings Department at first refused these new plans, too, on account of lack of stairs. It demanded that three flights of stairs should be provided instead of the two contemplated, but finally the department waived its objection, and the building was constructed with only two stairways, one leading to Greene street and the other to Washington Place.

From a statement issued last night by Borough President McAneny it was learned that he and Fire Commissioner Waldo had taken up the need of reinspection of such buildings after the recent factory fire in Newark. Commissioner Waldo assigned 500 or 600 firemen to conduct a preliminary examination, as the ordinary force of the Bureau of Buildings could not do the work. The men reported, according to Mr. McAneny, about 3,500 buildings in which the fire provision was not adequate, but the building on Washington Place and Greene street was not included in the report.

Report for Fire Department.

It was inspected by order of the Fire Department on October 15, 1910, by Edward O'Connor, foreman of Engine Company 72. This was the first engine company to reach the burning building on Saturday. The report of Foreman O'Connor as to the result of his inspection of the building was as follows:

Location—No. 23 to 29 Washington Place.

Construction—Brick and iron; ten stories in height.

Class—Fireproof.

Date of erection—1901.

Owner—J. J. Aesch, of South Norwalk, Conn.

Number of employees in building—1,000.

Fire escapes, outside—One.

Location—Rear; located good.

Stairways—Two; located at Greene street and Washington Place; condition of stairways good.

Fire appliances—Telephone connection with departmental headquarters by pneumatic system.

Two four-inch standpipes, connected outside.

Outside—Siamese connection, No. 2 size, three inches.

Tank on roof—Eight feet by ten feet; capacity, 5,000 gallons.

Buckets—On all floors, 295.

Assistant District Attorney Charles F. Bestwick, who has been assigned by Mr. Whitman to hold an inquiry, was at the scene of the fire shortly after the flames started on Saturday afternoon. He saw the disaster in its most horrible aspect and assisted in the rescue of a man who was attempting to save himself by sliding down the elevator ropes in the shaft. The man fell to the bottom of the shaft when his hands were burned and lost their hold on the cable. Mr. Bestwick assisted in getting this man out of the shaft and into the fresh air. He said last night:

Pictures for District Attorney.

"We have ordered numerous photographs taken of every part of the burned structure for evidence as to the actual conditions. So far as I am aware, there was only one fire escape on the building, and this was in the rear, and constituted the only means of escape for the hundreds who could not get down the stairway or the elevators.

"We have asked the Buildings Department for a report on the burned building, and all the other departments concerned have been requested to send detailed reports to the District Attorney's office. The report of the Buildings Department will include the plans for the building, and these will be thoroughly scrutinized as to their strict compliance with the law.

"An investigation of the defects that led to the catastrophe may develop a remedy that will prevent a repetition. The inquiry will be as rigid and thorough as it will be possible to make it, and I hope facts will be brought out that will point to practical methods for the safeguarding of the public and will fix the responsibility for this disaster beyond a question of doubt."

Fire Commissioner Waldo was at Fire Headquarters yesterday receiving reports from the men of his department. He was in Boston on Saturday when the news of the fire reached him, and he came back early yesterday morning. He immediately went to the burned building, where he was met by Deputy Chiefs Langford and Worth, with whom he inspected the premises. The following was the statement issued by Commissioner Waldo:

Means of Exit Advocated.

"The loss of more than 140 lives resulting from the Washington Place fire has demonstrated forcibly the contention of the Fire Department that while buildings may be fireproof the contents are not fireproof. Therefore, fire escapes and other good and sufficient means of exit should be required in buildings of this character, especially those in which large numbers of persons are assembled for work or other purposes. There are many buildings of this class in this city in which even worse conditions prevail.

"In the opinion of this department the means of exit from this building were insufficient. There was only one outside iron balcony fire escape, which was so constructed that when iron shutters on windows were opened it was impossible for persons to use it without first closing the shutters, which could not be done if persons were endeavoring to escape from the windows from the lower floors.

There were two enclosed fireproof stairs with window doors and 'jambs.' These doors were consumed by the fire and left the stairs open to the flames.

These stairs were only sufficiently wide for one person to descend at a time and with winding steps at the turns. Entrances to stairs were blocked by partitions. From indications, gates and doors appear to have been locked at the time of the fire.

Wants Fire Prevention Bureau.

"The Fire Commissioner is endeavoring to secure legislation which will create a bureau of fire prevention, with sufficient legal power to install automatic

and auxiliary fire appliances, to enforce fire preventive measures and to give to the department the right to insist on adequate means of escape in case of fire. The Fire Department is the most competent to pass on the necessity for fire escapes, due to their experience with fires.

"Several days ago a meeting was held in a Wall street law office denouncing the action of the department in requiring automatic sprinklers in buildings which, in the opinion of the department, required the same.

"Under the present law, the Fire Department has no control whatsoever over fire escapes or means of exit from fire."

Borough President McAneny issued the following statement:

"I trust that one definite result of this disaster will be thorough overhauling of the laws and ordinances with relation to fireproof construction and the proper protection of life. The Building Code, in Section 105, provides that all buildings of certain specified types, including factories, shall be equipped with 'such good and sufficient fire escapes, stairways or other means of egress' as the Superintendent of Buildings may require.

The question of the adequacy of fire escapes has been determined, however, when the plans are presented for approval. Once accepted as adequate they have been permitted to remain. The plans of the Aesch building were passed by the Board of Fire Underwriters. At the time of the recent Newark factory fire the need of systematic checking up of similar buildings in New York was pointed out by the Fire Department. Thereafter was brought sharply forward.

Waldo Acts on Suggestion.

I took the matter up at that time with Commissioner Waldo, who agreed to detail some five hundred or six hundred firemen for the purpose of a general preliminary examination of the buildings in New York. The Bureau of Buildings, which is engaged almost exclusively on new buildings, would have been wholly inadequate for the purpose. As a result of the investigation of the firemen, about thirty-five hundred cases of apparent lack of adequate fire escapes, stairways or other means of egress were reported to the Superintendent of Buildings.

Mr. Miller then detailed a squad of five or six of his men, under Chief Inspector Lucke, to inspect each of the cases reported. They included every case of fire escape, stairway or other means of egress to which the code refers—hotels, factories, boarding houses, schools, etc. The results of the inspection have been made. It was found in a large proportion of the cases that the law did not apply, but in at least 10 per cent of them, the bureau reports, action has been taken requiring the owners to remedy the defects satisfactorily with the provisions.

The acting superintendent, Mr. Ludwig, reports that under the terms of the report from the Fire Department shows that the Aesch building was not included in its list of defective buildings and that, technically, the building appears to conform to the code.

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Exempts Law to Be Enacted.

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the Building Code the Superintendent of the Fire Department would use his discretion as to the means of egress to the fire escapes, therefore, we would insist upon a fireproof passage from the court at the foot of the fire escapes to the street. Evidently the condition in this building met the approval of the Building Department when it was erected in 1900.

"When I investigated the building I found the structure all right, except for the ladders on the top floor and some tilting which had been destroyed. There were fire escapes, because all loft buildings must have them."

Safety by the Roof Was Possible.

An examination of the building yesterday showed that if those employed on the three floors which were burned could have got to the roof there would have been no loss of life. The roof was not damaged in any way. The two skylights were destroyed by the heat from below, but the roof showed no marks except a few pools of water on the cement and gravel covering, while half a dozen marks on the bricks of the building adjoining in Greene street showed where some of the girls who escaped to the roof made their way to the next building over the top of the shaft of the freight elevator and up a ladder of half a dozen steps.

The floors below the ones burned were dripping with water, and desks and stock were covered with tarpaulins, but there was no sign of the fire having reached below the eighth floor, where it started. The walls and windows of the adjoining buildings, however, showed the terrific heat that they had had to endure. The bricks were scorched and the paint scaled off, while the glass of windows that had been protected by heavy iron shutters was melted and the shutters were twisted into fantastic forms that never would suit again to save the windows.

Across the narrow court on the west of the iron shutters of the library of the New York University Law School were hanging twisted and torn from their hinges, while the glass of the windows was gone and the bodies and chairs were all scorched and charred by the terrible heat from the flames that had not penetrated the building.

Shows How Victims Were Caught.

But it was on the three floors through which the flames swept with such fearful rapidity that the signs were all about of the way in which the girls and men had been penned in and held to meet their death in the fire or jump to an equally terrible death on the stone pavement more than a hundred feet below.

On the west side of the building were two passenger elevators and next to them was a narrow inclosed stairway, two and a half feet wide. This stairway was unlighted and ended at the top floor. There was no egress from it to the roof, though the shaft penetrated the roof, where it was covered by a light metal skylight. Next to this shaft on the roof was the shaft of the passenger elevator, and it was over the two shaft coverings that many of those who escaped climbed with the aid of the students of the Law School.

The walls of the stairway shaft were unscorched and unmarked by any sign of fire, except immediately around the doors, where, as the fire burned its way through the doors, the whitened walls had been blackened for two or three feet only. The fire had not entered the stairway shaft. One pane of glass in the skylight over the shaft had been broken by the foot of one of the girls in climbing to safety on the Law School roof, and around this hole there was a slight smudge, showing where a wisp of smoke had made its way through the cracks of the doors and drifted up the shaft as through a chimney.

Factory Hose Not Put to Use.

Hanging beside each door in the shaft was a roll of fire hose, untouched. On the ninth floor only had the hose been taken from its hanging, and that it was not thrown down until after the fire was out was shown by the white wall under the place of the hose, contrasted with the scorched condition immediately around it, showing plainly how the roll of hose had protected the wall during the fire.

In no instance was the hose attached to the standpipe system with which the building was provided. A careful examination on all the floors showed that the hose hung beside the standpipe and the coupling had never been put in place for use, while the doors were closed between the hose and those whom it might have saved.

The doors to the stairway shaft had been burned and afterward torn from their hinges, but the doors to the two passenger elevators still stood intact. The wire glass panels were broken and melted, but on two of the floors the glass was still in such condition that the name of the firm could be read upon it. The doors to the right hand elevator were tightly closed on all three of the burned floors, and the doors to the left hand elevator were closed on both the eighth and the tenth floor. It was evident that no one had escaped from either the eighth or the tenth floors by the passenger elevators.

Shows Frenzy That Prevailed.

On the ninth floor the door of the left hand elevator was open, and the elevator at the bottom of the shaft showed for what a terrible purpose it had been torn open. The two elevators stood at the bottom of the shaft, the right hand one sunk partly below the floor level and the left hand one, with the door open and the iron top broken through as though it had been but a model of paper, was evidence of the desperate leap through the open door on the ninth floor.

In the far northeast corner was the only other hope of the men and women penned in with the flames, and to reach it they must fight their way through their struggling fellows and over the hundreds of machines that choked every possible inch of floor space. The bent and twisted iron legs of the work tables still stood in the long rows, separated by narrow aisles, with only room to crowd into them two chairs pressed back to back.

In the far northeast corner was the shaft of the freight elevator, guarded by heavy iron doors. On each of the three floors these doors were closed, and on the ninth floor there was a heavy iron bar before them. There was no sign that the doors had been opened on any of the floors during the time of the fire.

Next to the freight elevator was the shaft of the main stairway of the building. Like the stairway on the outside, it was two and one-half feet wide, and only one person could go up or down at a time. To pass one had to wait on one of the landings, which occurred at every sixth step, where the stairs turned in the narrow confines of the shaft. To hurry up or down these stairs was an impossibility, even when conditions were at their best.

"I am not prepared to say whether the dimensions of the fire escape are within the law. As in Section 103 of



FALL OF BODIES BROKE IRON AND GLASS.

Hole in daylight at side of Washington Place building, made by the impact of victims who jumped from the windows. (Copyright, 1911, by American Press Association.)

The light for these stairs came from windows looking out upon the court in which the fire escape was placed and filtered through dirty panes clouded by the thick wire that saved the glass. After the fire the stairs were covered with broken glass from the windows and the wireglass panels of the doors into the shop floors, but while the flames raged only the girls on the tenth floor could use this one possible means of escape, and they had to fight their way through flames and smoke that poured in through the broken windows at the sides of the shaft.

On the eighth and ninth floors the girls were held back by the doors that opened inward and against which they pressed, only closing them the more tightly in their frantic efforts to escape. If the doors had been built to open outward, in the only way that would have offered any hope to the panicstricken workers, escape would have been equally cut off, for in their desperate anxiety to save space the builders of the structure had so planned the stair shaft that the leaves of the door would have blocked the stairway, either up or down, if the doors had been properly swung for use in an emergency of life and death.

In this shaft, also, useless as it was in the other stair shaft, hung more fire hose. Just without the doors and where there was no human possibility of reaching it, hung coils of the pipe couplings and had never been uncoiled since it was hung there when the building was first opened for use. Like the hose in the other shaft, it had protected the walls from the scorching of the flames that buried the lintels of the doors and at last left no one alive to use them.

Iron Ladders Twisted by Heat.

On the north side of the building, opening on a narrow court, was a row of a half dozen windows, in front of the middle two of which was the fire escape. After the fire the iron ladders were twisted and bent by the heat far away from the building and the rungs hung by one rivet or had dropped off entirely. The iron balconies were twisted and distorted and their slender railings had been torn from their fastenings by the efforts of the maddened women to reach the ladders from which they were barred by the great iron shutters.

Each of these balconies was walled across by two folded iron shutters that completely blocked the passage and made it impossible to get from the ladder coming from the upper floor to that reaching to the floor beneath.

What was left was only a dash to the courtyard a hundred feet below. And here was a long row of sharp iron pickets, on which whoever tried that means of safety was certain to be impaled. But if by chance the pickets were missed and life was not dashed out, then the unfortunate woman was imprisoned in a cage from which there was no opening. At one end was a window with heavy steel bars opening into a neighboring building, while at the other was the opening of the sub-basement of the burning building, and this too, was protected by steel bars set close together and firmly bedded in cement and stone.

In this cleverly constructed trap hundreds of women were held prisoners, while the flames rushed at them and small, inadequate hand fire extinguishers lay scattered over the floor beside the buckets empty of water and which could be filled only from two little spigots in a hand washstand.

Complaint from Law School.

Professor Francis W. Aymer, of the law department of New York University, said yesterday that he sent a complaint to the Buildings Department about two months ago, in which he pointed out to the authorities the inadequacy of the exit provisions in the burned building.

The New York University Law School is in the same block with the burned building and Professor Aymer could see from the windows of his office how many people were employed in that building and how dimly and traceable the single fire escape was. He said that he knew that there was only one narrow stairway leading to the roof, and declared that he had called all these defects to the attention of the Buildings Department.

In due course of time, Professor Aymer added, he received an acknowledgment of his complaint and the assurance that the matter would be investigated. This, he said, was the last he had heard from the Buildings Department.

Max Rottner, of No. 1904 Washington avenue, who, after identifying his brother, Theodore, went to the Mercer street police station, said that both he and his brother were at work on the eighth floor of the factory building where the fire originated, and that he threw a few buckets of water on the blaze. He declared that the blaze gained headway and soon got beyond the control of those who endeavored to extinguish it.

He said that when he found that the fire was rapidly spreading over the eighth floor of the building he ran to the stairway and down to the ground floor and escaped from the building. He said that he thought his brother was follow-

ing him, but that when he got to the street he saw nothing of him and was unable to re-enter the building to search for him.

He added that a number of the women employees in the building escaped from the structure at the same time as he. His face was slightly burned. The body of his brother was burned almost beyond recognition.

Forewoman Tells of Panic.

Lucy Weselofsky, forewoman over the presses on the tenth floor of the building, told the story of the fire as far as she and her girls were concerned when she called at the Mercer street police station yesterday to claim a lost bankbook.

"There were seventy-eight girls working under me on the tenth floor," she said, "and a dozen men working as cutters. We were about to close when I heard the noise of crashing glass on some floor below. I ran to the window, and, opening it, looked down. It was perhaps two minutes before I saw the fire, and then the cries from the girls on the floors below began to ring out, and my girls got into a panic.

"They began to run to and fro. Some grabbed their things and rushed toward the elevators, and when they found that the cars were not coming up they ran back toward the stairway on the Greene street side, which leads to the roof.

"We tried to calm them and we cried out at the top of our voices that all would be saved if they only could stop piling into the narrow stairway. And they all were saved except one, who was so terrorstricken that she must have lost her mind."

This girl, Miss Weselofsky said, was Clothilda Terdanova. She tore her hair and ran from window to window, until finally, before anybody could stop her, she jumped on the ledge and leaped into the street.

"She was young and very pretty," said Miss Weselofsky. "She was to leave us next Saturday, and her marriage was set for four weeks from to-day."

Police Find Lost Money.

Miss Weselofsky went to the police station to inquire for a bankbook and a purse which she dropped with her apron while making the escape to the roof. She said the bankbook showed a balance of \$52 and had \$4 in cash between its leaves. A purse with \$15 was in the apron pocket. The lieutenant at the desk told her that the articles had been found and that everything was intact, but Miss Weselofsky did not know the number of her bankbook, and so she had to go back to her home to find out what the number was.

George De Witt, a student of the New York University Law School, who lives at No. 117 Waverly Place, said last night that the first cries of the women were taken by the students as mere boisterous outbursts.

It was not until we saw the flames that we realized what was happening," he added, "and we rushed to the roof of our building to see if we could be of assistance. We saw at least sixty women gathered on the roof of the burning building, trying vainly to reach the roof of our building.

"We got a ladder, but it was not long enough, and so we put it flat across the space between the coping of our building and the skylight above the elevator shaft on the Washington Place side of the burning building. But this skylight was high, and the women had to climb over to a much lower skylight above the stairway next to the elevator, and so they reached the ladder, and we helped them across to the coping and over to our roof of the girls dropped their coats and hats while climbing to the top of the skylight. Mr. De Witt said, and they insisted upon going back to get their things. The students, however, did not permit them to do it, but got down themselves and brought the lost things to the girls.

Some of the girls dropped their coats and hats while climbing to the top of the skylight. Mr. De Witt said, and they insisted upon going back to get their things. The students, however, did not permit them to do it, but got down themselves and brought the lost things to the girls.

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